OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

The Stirring of Deep Waters

By Gardner Weeks Wood

IT is rather odd that on this harsh, blustery March morning I should be writing beside the fire in my quiet library. It is not that the act of writing is in itself unusual, for that is a more than occasional diversion of mine; but this is essentially a story of summer and its reflected moods, and I have always been insistent that the telling of a tale should be done in its appropriate season—the locusts of August should be throbbing hotly outside my window to-day, and the green hills be touched with misted blue.

However, as a newspaper reporter might say, this incident in Jim Chamberlain's life has a winter "end;" and that, perforce, must be my excuse.

I have been wondering about Jim Chamberlain for a long time because Jim is an old, old friend of mine and I am very fond of him—probably because of our great contrasts. He is big, hearty, unimaginative and practical. Jim makes a great deal of money every year—I am what he calls a "business outcast." To Jim the vista of a cross-street lined with brick and fire-escapes is wholly satisfying. I prefer a fair hill slope and a tumbling brook. Jim dreams of margins—I of marginalia.

Perhaps I would be more exact in saying that this was the man of a year ago—I'm not quite sure what he is doing now. In March last, just after the terrible Sunlam Bridge railroad disaster, Jim started for the West. To investigate irrigation in Arizona was his alleged reason; but I believe that he went away with no other motive than to be somewhere alone and to think. One letter I have had from him, and it said nothing of irrigation, or of anything else, for that matter. I have found Jim's reticence at times to be singularly illuminating.

I am beginning to be puzzled by his absence—I want to see him again and find out whether the same comfortable look has returned to his eyes, if his laugh is as full and deep and his hand as hearty as it was when I first knew him.

Of course, Jim had met many women. At various times my wife had attempted to marry him to several nice girls she knows, but she could not get him interested. He never had time to consider marriage. I firmly believe he has cherished a little resentment against Marie and me ever since we married, and my wife insisted on a country home. Whenever he came out to see us I knew that he was regretfully turning back in memory to our old-time, pajama-clad, Eighty-ninth Street Sundays, and to memories of a room filled with men, tobacco smoke, and Sunday supplements, and an atmosphere of poker and personalities.

To Jim, "business" was both the means and the end of existence. His days were maelstroms of excitement from the moment he entered his office until the electric lights began to glow.

Jim loved a fight with all the fervor of his bulldog [illegible] Perkins, who had just lost a bitter struggle to dislodge Jim from his board of directors, struck pretty close to the gold. Said he, "I believe Chamberlain thinks he's Napoleon and sits up all night sticking pins in my railroad maps."

Over a year ago I could see a change. Jim was becoming irritable. His constant good-humor disappeared. His iron nerve sometimes failed him. Worthing, an old-time friend of ours, told me that Jim had dined with him not long before. Midway the dinner Jim had fainted.

"There's something the matter with the man," said Worthing. "He ought to ease up, but I can't do anything with him. He amiably tells me to go to the devil when I suggest a rest."

"Why don't you get after him, Ted?" he added. "He'll listen to you."

I did get after him and he laughed at me.

"You're crazy, Teddy," said he, "like all the others. I'm not sick, and if I were, do you think I can get away from my business?

"I suppose Worthing or Evans put you up to this," he continued, "because I was a little tired the other night. That's no reason at all why I should take a vacation. There's no excuse for that, anyway. I've never wanted to take a vacation and I'm not going away. I can't stop working, and you know it."

I did not see Jim for several weeks after that incident. One day late in May he telephoned, asking me to call on him in town.

I promised to be on hand; and five o'clock of the next afternoon found me at the door of Jim's apartment. He calls it his "bungalow," commemoratively; because he got the idea and the means to crystalize it when he bought a tract of land in Southern California and changed it to a neatly trimmed and populous "addition."

Gradually he had filled his place with interesting things, for in an abashed way Jim is a collector. If something strikes his fancy, no matter what is is, he buys it, takes it home furtively, and places it with calm indifference in a corner, on a mantelpiece, or under his bed, and then forgets it.

A large abalone shell from Catalina may hold bullets from the Custer battlefield; or a blood-rusted machete leer menacingly from a tall and harmless Munich stein. These collections are the diversion of Sin, his dog, and the pet abhorrence of the immutable Oriental, Kamoto, who cooks and slaves for Jim by day and reads law for himself by night.

Kamoto appeared nervous when he admitted me.

"Miss' Chamblin sick," was his greeting; "he say you come in."

I followed Kamoto to the bedroom and found Jim propped up on pillows, hair a-tumble, and in an evident ill-temper.

"Sit down near the window, Teddy," he commanded; "light the strongest cigar you can find and blow the smoke this way; throw your packages on the floor where that heathen will have to pick them up; kick the dog into the hall; and then humor me at bit."

My lesson had been learned from long experience; I obeyed. Jim sniffed hungrily at the smoke for a time.

"Now have a drink, Teddy, a fine, long, cold one," said he.

Kamoto brought it.

"Now," said Jim, "set it down on that table where I can see it and then rattle the spoon and ice around in it so I can hear it very plainly."

I did so for a long time in silence.

"Well?" I asked, finally.

"Oh, it's the fault of that fool doctor of yours," he complained. "Hes got me at last. He says my nerves are right on the point of unravelling and insists that if I smoke another cigar he won't be responsible. He has ordered me to go away somewhere to a quiet spot and rest! What do you think of that, Teddy?" he snarled. "Rest! Simply because my heart bumps are out of tune once in a while.

"Think of it, Teddy!" he implored, plaintively. "Picture me sitting day after day on an open-work veranda with a lot of crocheting women!

"'No newspapers,' says that fool doctor, 'no telephones, no drinks, no cigars—**nothing** for three months!'"

I knew that Doctor Evans had given the verdict.

"He's right, Jim," said I; "you must do it. Go away somewhere and catch a little fish in a little river—you'll like it."

He turned his face to the wall. "Well," said he, "that's the last straw. I had hoped for better things from you, Teddy, but if you are all organized to hound me out of town I suppose I'll have to go. The Lord only knows what will happen to my business," he added, "with those Broad Street fellows busy as blood-thirsty pirates while I'm spending the summer talking to the little flowers—but I'll go."

While we were consulting time-tables, Jim remembered that several years ago a friend of his father, a Mr. Graydon, an educated and travelled gentleman, had grown tired of metropolitan turmoil and built a home in the heart of the northern wilderness. Thither he had taken his wife, and there they were still living an isolated but happy life.

"If I have to do this outrageous thing at all," said he, "I'm going to try to do it right."

Accordingly, he wrote to Mr. Graydon. The reply was a letter saying that Jim's father was delightfully remembered, and that his son should come immediately and stop as long as he wished with them.

"You will honor us by coming," wrote Mr. Graydon, "and my wife and daughter join me in bidding you welcome to our woods."

"Daughter, eh," mused Jim, "that's a little more than I had bargained for; but—let it go. I may be able to escape from one girl. I couldn't from a hotel veranda cluttered up with 'em."

I went with Jim to his train and saw him off. Jim didn't look pleased, but he was taking his share in the unpleasant thing with earnestness and determination.

Only one letter from Jim reached me during the summer. He wrote briefly, as usual, and merely to say that he was better, that his hosts were hospitality personified, and that he was to return about the middle of August.

It lacked only a few days of September when Jim wrote that he had returned. I dropped in unannounced a day or so later and found him at home.

The few days in town had made no impression on his thick coat of tan—I remember how white his collar looked when I found him at table just at the evening's edge.

Jim rose joyously to grasp my hand. I knew he was well by the way he did it.

"Jim, you ruffian," said I, feelingly, "you're fit again."

"Fit?" he laughed. "I should say I am! I never felt so keen in my life. Nothing but bone and muscle, Teddy. Heart as steady as a clock. Wish I were going to play tackle on the old team again this fall. I'd crumple 'em up!"

"I believe you would," said I with conviction; "but how did it all happen? Did you enjoy yourself? Did you catch a little fish?—and did you manage to keep out of the young lady's way?"

It was dusk in the room and quite impossible to see distinctly, but I thought I detected a change in Jim's expression. His answer was impressive, but none the less evasive.

"The Graydons are the Lord's own people, and I never had so bully a time in my life."

He settled back in his chair.

"Teddy, you've always been right," he confessed. "There is no place like the big outdoors! I've been a fool long enough, and I'm going to take life easier hereafter. This town can go hang for a while every summer now. I learned a lot of things in the woods—but the biggest lesson was that the stock-market doesn't count for much when compared to a shadowy lake at evenfall."

This kind of talk from Jim—practical, unimaginative Jim!

"I'd like to tell you all about it to-night, Teddy, but I can't. You will have to wait. I've got to take some packages up to Mrs. Graydon's sister on Eighty-ninth Street. Odd, isn't it? Same block where you and I used to live."

As I was leaving him, Jim said: "I've been downtown to-day, and the way those beggars have been tangling that Central-Soo proposition is a crime. They took advantage of my being away to win over those wooden-headed Dutch stockholders, and now I've got the problem of my life to handle. I'm going to make them curl up, though, before I get through with 'em. I'll teach 'em not to meddle with my affairs.

"Did you," I inquired, maliciously, "get these benevolent ideas in your talks with the little flowers?"

"Now, Teddy, don't get nasty," said he; "you know I can't let those fellows trim me. This is the last big scrap I'm going into—after this one, things are going to be smoother. Just now, though, I'm too strong to be standing around loose. I need action."

When I got home that night I told my wife about him.

"Something has happened to Jim," said I. "He is as husky as a truck horse, but, on the other hand, his soul seems filled with an ineffable glory. He spoke slightingly of Wall Street, and he mooned about a 'shadowed lake at evenfall.'"

Marie looked at me in blank amazement.

"Theodore," she cried, "he didn't!"

"Those were his exact words," I assured her, "and moreover, he is crazy about some girl. He has her picture in his watch. It is the same as a new one on his mantelpiece, and she's a beauty, too. Add to this that he is so robust and happy that he is going to kill a few financiers to-morrow for diversion."

"Theodore," said she, "if I didn't know you so well, I'd surely believe you were losing your mind. As it is, I think Jim Chamberlain ought to be investigated."

"Now, you must find out who she is," my wife continued, "and if you can't, I will."

She failed, however, just as I did.

Jim came to dinner and gave us the story of the summer, except the one thing we really wanted to know. Repeated hints and deft questioning were of no avail, and finally we gave up.

Autumn came; the financiers proved hard to kill, the wooden-headed Dutchmen singularly stolid. Jim had the fight of his life, as he had wished, and did not win out until late in November. Then something went wrong in copper, and he plunged into that like a warring Goth.

I saw little of Jim during this time, and whenever I did there were fewer reminiscences—finally no reference at all to the past summer.

The business lust was on him again and a deep, troubled look settled into his eyes—something that had never been there before.

There were strange moods on the man.

Winter fell upon the land and roared up and down its streets and byways in a rage of triumph.

I vividly recall the bitter day when Jim called me up.

"Please come in this afternoon," said he, "prepared to spend a day."

Night had come to the city as I creaked through the crisp, snowy streets to Jim's apartment. Few figures were scurrying, muffled and shivering, to belated dinners. In Jim's room, as Kamoto admitted me, there were no lights, and my friend was standing alone by the window, looking out across the frozen square toward the fiery cross that blazed on the church tower opposite. He turned as I entered, and I saw that his face was white in the pale reflection. Curiously enough, the memory of his return from the country months ago flashed through my mind. I remembered the white contrast of his collar that night against his sun-tanned throat. Now it was different. Jim's buoyant manner had disappeared, too. His face was grave, his eyes troubled, as he greeted me.

"I am glad you could come, Teddy," said he. "I shall have something to tell you directly. Here are cigars and whiskey. Make yourself comfortable, for I want to talk to you slowly and understandingly. It may take a good bit of the night."

We sat down before the low wood fire. Subdued sounds from the other rooms betokened Kamoto; and Sin, the dog, lay outstretched on the rug, nose between paws, eyes fixed sleepily on the embers, dreaming his dog dreams.

Finally Jim began without preface.

"I want to tell you, Teddy," said he, "an incident of my vacation trip last summer that I have never alluded to before.

"The Graydon home lies at the end of a long wagon trail through the forests. I reached it two days after I left you in New York, and I imagine I must have looked pretty well used up to the woodsmen who met me. Canadian roads are picturesque, but they are not macadam, and my nerves were certainly in bad case before we reached the house. The last hour of the trail came at the end of the long northern gloaming. Mr. Graydon and his wife welcomes me from the lamplit doorway of their home.

"I have known a lot of people in my life, Teddy—men and women; but there is a rare couple. It is hard to speak of them separately, their lives were so graciously intertwined. You always expected to see them together. Interests and tastes the same, work and pleasure always to be shared. The influence of the wilderness had done that for them, I think.

"At a glance I saw in Mr. Graydon a student and a gentleman; somewhat of a recluse, perhaps, but a kindly one.

"'Your father was one of my best friends,' said he, 'and I want to continue the friendship with his son. Every one called your father "Jim." You look like him, and I imagine you are "Jim" to your friends. May I be among th :m?'

"I was too tired to talk much that night, and went almost immediately to my room. I shall never forget that room, Teddy; not that there was anything striking about its interior or its comfortable fittings, but it had four low windows that were perpetual delights. The breath of the pines was always drifting through them—sunrise and moonlight flooded them. That night, before I turned in, I caught from one of them the reflection of a big star in sleeping water" (the poetizing of Jim had evidently been thorough).

"Because I was an invalid, I suppose, my breakfast was sent up to me the next morning—a new luxury in my case, for I hate being coddled, as you know.

"From my table by the south window I got my first definite idea of my surroundings.

"Before the house lay a broad sweep of lawn and Mrs. Graydon's beds of old-fashioned flowers—it was good to see the marigolds and the tall hollyhocks again—then a path leading down through the tall trees to a lake—a lake that was part of the wilderness. Rugged, pine-swept shores; deep, silent bays; rock-ribbed islands; long, blue stretches of water. In the far distance of the lake I saw a dot of red and the quick flash of a paddle.

"Back of the house and on all sides rose the forest-clad hills glorious in green.

"The house bore every evidence of the fact that a man of adequate means had lived there and built as he chose. It was a low-roofed structure, broadly verandaed, stout, to resist winter and invite summer.

"Inside and out, the place was powerfully attractive to me. It seemed to awaken something within me that I had never suspected—I had always wanted this thing, but had never realized it before.

"It did not occur to me as strange—finding such

"Marjorie, Marjorie, dear," said I, "I love you."

an establishment as this in the midst of the forest. It belonged there. Its perfect harmony with the things of nature made it a part of them.

"The windows opened upon a new world, Ted, and the evenings we spent in the huge inglenook of its low ceiling living-room revealed a new life to me."

Jim paused in reflection—Sin stirred uneasily in his nook before the fire; the tall cathedral clock in the corner smote the soft silence with its count of the hour; an ember fell, flared crisply, striking a ruddy glow on the brass of the andirons.

"I found Mrs. Graydon among her flowers my first morning," Jim resumed, quietly.

"'You are better already, Mr. Jim,' said she, as she straightened up from her bed of marigolds; 'I can see it. In a week you will begin to enjoy our life here, unless you are hopelessly metropolitan.'

"I'm not often given to fine words, as you know, Teddy, but I was able to assure her that my few hours had already convinced me of that.

"'I have only one request to make,' said Mrs. Graydon, 'and that is that you will do as you please here. Our happiness will be in seeing you win back your strength and in enjoying yourself as you wish.

"'Mr. Graydon is in the rush of finishing his new book, and as he thinks I am necessary to him we shall be busy much of the time.

"'My daughter, though, will teach you the ways of the country if you desire it. She knows our wilderness and its language, but if you wish to learn them alone we shall not interfere.'

"I was idly watching Mrs. Graydon busy with her sweet peas when a long, clear 'Hallo!' floated up from the lake.

"'Ah, there she is now, Mr. Jim,' said she. 'Shall we go down to meet her?'

"At the lake's edge lay a boathouse and a solid little wharf. The girl in the red canoe had just drifted in."

"'This is my daughter Marjorie,' said Mrs. Graydon.

"I looked into a pair of frank brown eyes and felt a firm, small hand in mine.

"'So this is Mr. Chamberlain,' said she. 'I am very sorry to know that you have been ill, but I am sure you will soon be strong again here.'

"I don't know what made me do it, Teddy, but before I realized it I was saying to her, 'I am sure of it, too, Miss Marjorie, if you will help me.'

"I cursed myself instantly for a fool, but it was unnecessary. About her there was none of the self-consciousness of the girl that would have suspected flattery.

"'Indeed I will help,' said she, earnestly, 'if you wish me to.'

"Whatever I may have expected," continued Jim, "I had not thought to meet in that far country such a superb creature as she. No colorless photograph could show you the real Marjorie.

"I had to look down but little to meet her smiling, level eyes. Her rough blouse and short skirt strove vainly to conceal a supple figure, soft with youth, yet strong with a surprising vigor. Her cheeks were aglow with the pulse of young blood. She stood straight-limbed as one of the pines. Its perfume was in her hair. I remember her standing that morning with the sunlight sifting down through the trees upon her head. I could not decide whether it was bronze or brown. There was a brightness in it, anyway; and always, in the wind, stray, careless strands were blowing across her face—Diana, but more than that: a woman.

"A new life began for me that morning, Teddy—a summer with a girl as its constant factor."

The room had been growing chill as Jim paused in his tale. I threw more wood on the fire and we watched the flames creep slowly up to catch anew at the logs.

"Mr. and Mrs. Graydon," said he, "were urgently busy with their book. That left Marjorie and me largely to ourselves. Their confidence in her was complete—they knew her; the shackles of a false convention had no place in that country.

"By day we sailed the lake, explored the hidden rivers, fished the brawling brooks. Evenings—the slow, northern twilights—we spent under the brightening stars, and on days of rain we read and talked together in the sheltered verandas or by the fireside.

"I grew strong rapidly in our long tramps over the trails of the wilderness, and one by one we conquered all the hills.

"She came to know me as thoroughly as you do, Teddy; my commonplace, uneventful life; the demoralized condition of whatever finer ideals I may once have cherished; my sordid outlook; my materialist's world.

"I think from the first her sympathy was aroused.

"It was hard for her to understand how I could have kept my hands away from the good things of life.

"'I am really sorry for you, Mr. Chamberlain,' said she, once; 'sorry that such a man as you should have fallen into such a narrow life; and yet—yet, I am glad, too!'

"'Why?' I asked. 'Why?'

"'Oh, it is selfish of me, perhaps, but I had been afraid before you came that there would be nothing for me to do—nothing in which I could help.'

"I was like a child, Teddy, getting its first sight of the country. It was a drift back to the far days of boyhood.

"My abilities began to seem exceedingly small and worthless up there, Teddy, and it was not only Marjorie's kinship with the woods that emphasized it, but her gentle womanliness, her fineness and tact, the delicacy of her nature, the rarity of her understanding.

"Her father's library was at her fingers' end; she knew writers old and new, but the great out-of-doors was her favorite book; the trail of the padding fox, the swirl and dip of the kingfisher, her pictures.

"'This is my world—I love it,' she said, stretching her slim arms to the north.

"Do you wonder, Teddy, do you wonder any longer that this girl grew upon me as the days drifted by?

"Days became weeks, and her unconscious appeal to me grew stronger. I tried, tried desperately, not to let go of myself, and in the main I succeeded. I don't know why I struggled, but I suppose it was my instinctive resistance to the shock of having the habits and ideas of a lifetime overturned in a moment.

"It was fairly easy in our early acquaintance when there was but friendliness in her clear, sweet eyes. But finally came a day when in them I saw—isn't it strange, isn't it almost unhuman, to think of me, Jim Chamberlain, being able to see what lies in a woman's eyes?—but there came a day when in Marjorie's eyes I saw something new. Maybe it was because I was hoping for it. There was a look not quite of fear, for she knew no fear; but a self-questioning look; and I caught, another day, a flash of tenderness in her face when I had been telling her some incident of my life—it has been a lonely one, Teddy, as you know. Up there I saw clearly that I had never been really happy before."

Again the silences of the room: the fire's red wavering; the thin smoke hanging in the still air; Jim's eyes closed in retrospect.

"We had been out in the little red canoe one moonlight night," he continued.

"After I left her that night I knew the balance had turned. Perhaps it was the witchery of the moonlight, or Marjorie's exquisitely tender face that had been lifted to mine a half-hour before. Perhaps I was over-impetuous. I don't know.

"At any rate, I realized with a quick shock how near was the time of my leaving and how empty my existence would be without her. I couldn't bear the thought of it. I knew at last that I loved her, and that nothing else mattered until Marjorie Graydon promised to be my wife.

"The next day was one of intermittent showers, but at night it grew colder and the rain settled down to a steady beat.

"As our custom had been after the evening meal, the four of us sat for a time before the fire; just such a fire as this one, Teddy. We talked as usual; at least Mr. Graydon did. I had not much to say, and there was a pensiveness in Marjorie's face as she half reclined on the bear-skin before the flames.

"But Mr. Graydon's book clamored for completion, and soon he and Mrs. Graydon went to his study to work.

"I shifted to the low leather seat of the inglenook, where I could see Marjorie's face touched stealthily by the flicker of the logs. Her eyes were wonderful that night; deep, still, and shadowed.

"'Well,' said I, 'a week from to-night will find me back in old New York.'

"I attempted an easy tone, but it was a failure, and quiet fell upon us both.

"Marjorie's eyes were fixed upon the fire and her slender hand was slowly caressing Sin's head as the dog lay beside her.

"Suddenly she looked up at me, and I saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"I bent toward her.

"'Marjorie, Marjorie dear,' said I, 'I love you. There is nothing in my world but you. Is there—is there any chance that you—?'

"'Ah, Jim!' she cried, and lifted her arms up to me. The tears were still dim in her eyes, but there was something else in them—something else."

Jim had been talking as one in a half trance. Now he roused himself quickly and walked over to the window.

"The next day," he continued, "I told Mr. Graydon and his wife, and asked their consent.

"'I knew your father, Jim,' said Mr. Graydon, 'and if you are like him, I think Marjorie will be happy with you; but it is hard to give her up! You may have her, Jim, but—don't be in a hurry.'

"I promised reluctantly to be patient for a year—the next summer I would come back to the woods for my girl.

"The next few days were days I cannot tell you about. They belonged to Marjorie and me—our last days together before I came back to this cursed town—wonderful moments.

"At the end of the home trail we parted, her arms about me, my lips in her hair.

"'I can live,' she whispered, 'because you are coming back to me—Jim, my Jim! Come soon, soon!'

"You saw me just after I got back here, Teddy," he continued. "I wanted to tell you about it then, but couldn't. It was something too sacred to share even with you.

"You saw that I was happy. I had to work hard so that I wouldn't be too happy. You remember the mix-up in that railroad merger. It was a bad one, and I worked day and night for weeks like a foundryman.

"Every night, however, my letter to Marjorie started north and each morning brought one from her. I noticed, though, that in the stress of business my letters grew shorter. It had to be so. I didn't have a minute's peace until December.

"One day in the rush of that campaign a letter lay on my desk. It was from Marjorie, and I put it in my pocket to read later. I forgot it, Teddy, until the next day's letter reminded me of it. Two weeks afterward I found in my coat two unopened letters of the week before.

"And I—my work was driving me, and I made it an excuse to myself—days came when I was too weary to write, and later they became days when I forgot to write, days when I even forgot her.

"The little things I had cherished because they told me of her began to slip from me—a ribbon that carried the scent of her hair, a bit of birch bark which she had fashioned into a tiny canoe for me, a pair of dainty moccasins I had taken without leave because they were hers—these things that I had loved were losing their meaning. They were gathering dust.

"You noticed her picture on the mantel, Ted, but you didn't ask about it, so I didn't tell you. Well, one night on reaching home I chanced to notice its absence.

"I asked Kamoto about it because he had had his orders never to touch it. He knew nothing about it, and only after a considerable search I found it back of my desk where it had fallen and had lain unnoticed and forgotten for a week!

"These were perhaps trivial things, but they set me thinking when I summed them all up. I was overwhelmed with remorse at my thoughtlessness, and the result was a long and tender letter to Marjorie.

"Ah, Teddy, the letter I had in return! I read it over to-day and wished I had never been born.

"'Thanksgiving and you are coming, dear,' she wrote. 'Each day I count good because it is past and you are nearer to me. Our woods are leafless now; but you, sweetheart, are unchanged—your letter is next my heart—come to me, my Jim!'

"And where did I spend Thanksgiving? At a Broadway hotel with a man named Smith!

"Don't you see now—can't you see, Ted, where the trouble lay?

"I was forgetting her, forgetting the girl who had promised to be my wife.

"Doc Evans, Bill Worthing—all that old crowd at the club and down-town were reasserting themselves—unconsciously enough, to be sure, but persistently. Wall Street and Broadway were at their work again.

"Marjorie's face was growing dim; the memory of her lips was fading. Marjorie was passing out of my life.

"But I would not acknowledge it to myself nor to her. I would not. My bull-headed determination has carried my through a terrible winter; but I deserve it—I deserve it all.

"Marjorie does not suspect. She believed the reasons I gave her for not going to her at Thanksgiving or the holidays. She accepted my excuses—and my excuses to her were lies. I lied to Marjorie Graydon!"

"I wouldn't get excited about it, Jim," said I. "You're overworked again and this affair is magnifying itself to you. The chances are that you are not as deeply involved as you imagine. Probably you will never see her again, and her infatuation for you will die out in time!"

Jim's face went livid and distorted with anger.

"Why—why; you smug-faced Pharisee, you!—how dare you say such things to me? You know me, don't you? You know I am telling you the truth, even if I haven't told it to her! Look at this."

I took the oblong paper he thrust toward me, and by the firelight I read this telegram:

"I am coming to you. It is too long to wait. Aunt Harriett's. Friday night.

"MARJORIE."

"Now what have you to say?" asked Jim. "What am I to do? Marjorie Graydon's happiness, her life, lies in my hands—I know it. She is living for me as she thinks I am living for her.

"What right have I to go into her home and win her love, unless I know I can give in return? Can I make her happy? I have been letting things drift because I did not know. Can I marry her without the full conviction I had last summer? Can I, through a lifetime, which I would gladly give, blind her to my deception? Shall I tell her the truth and break her heart, or shall I live a life-long lie?

"Shall I learn, when I see her, that love can be born again? Will this winter's doubt vanish as I touch her lips? Ah, how I despise myself?"

He stopped with head dropped on his breast.

And to-morrow night Jim would have to know his mind.

In the morning he said to me with a drawn face, "Teddy, I don't know yet." In the afternoon the same: "I can't tell; I don't know. I'll have to wait until I see her."

The night was crisp and brilliant as Jim took his cab. The booming cry of newsboys calling a special "collision extra" fell on deaf ears.

At the corner of Eighty-ninth Street he dismissed the cab and walked the remaining half-block alone.

A maid answered his ring. She recognized him and started forward eagerly.

"Has Miss Graydon arrived yet?" he asked, abruptly.

The little maid gave a quick gesture of horror.

"Why, Mr. Chamberlain!" she gasped. "Didn't you know? Haven't you heard? Miss Harriett sent for you over an hour ago."

"What—what for? What do you mean?" interrupted Jim, hoarsely.

"Why, Mr. Chamberlain," said she, "there's been a terrible accident to the train and Miss Marjorie was—was killed!"

Jim gazed at the trembling little maid for a full minute before he went, stumbling, down the steps.

It was then that all his questioning was answered.